Chapter 2

The Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

Over the last quarter of the century, many research studies have been carried out on various aspects of language learning and teaching, highlighting the role of materials and the interacting contextual factors. The objective of the literature review is to identify the research studies done on self-instructional materials and other relevant concepts: English for Academic Purposes (EAP), adult learners and learner autonomy. The significance of those studies, their contribution to the current study and to the field as a whole is examined in this chapter. This survey further focuses on the nature and relevance of the above factors in the vast field of English Language Teaching (ELT) to situate the current research in the relevant context.

This study is about "designing self-instructional materials" in a post-method era, about how course writers can become strategic thinkers, and strategic practitioners. It reflects the heightened awareness that there is no "best method" waiting to be discovered, and the artificial dichotomy between theory and practice has not been of much help to teachers.

In this chapter, we would review the theories and research work in the field of distance education, materials development, and programme evaluation. We would also refer to learner autonomy and research on adult learner. Finally, we would conclude with research on "English for Academic Purposes".

Bryant (2004), has suggested a few points which could guide the direction of the literature survey which include the research studies carried out on similar topics and land
mark research in pertinent areas. How the present research can contribute to the previous knowledge of the subject is also one main point to be considered in the literature survey.

Based on the perceived gaps and observations of the EGAP programme, the following assumptions shape the content and structure of the literature survey;

- the EGAP course should be extended to act not only as a bridge that link learners to a particular level of proficiency but also as a path that leads up to, extends through and beyond their academic course;
- the materials should be self-instructional in the sense that they should foster learner autonomy and independence;
- thus, the role of SIM should be extended to that of a facilitator and not merely an 'instructor';
- learning languages in distance mode should have a wider scope which extends from learner centred to learning centred in order to foster learner autonomy and life-long learning;
- English for Special Academic Purposes (ESAP) element should be incorporated in EGAP programme to cater to the needs of the learners in coping with their academic genres and disciplinary conventions;
- course materials should promote capacity building and the effectiveness in this regard should be tested through longitudinal research studies.

In the context of English language learning in the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) is the only programme that is offered as a service course to cater to the language requirements of EAP students who register for degrees of many disciplines in the OUSL. Though it is designed and planned to suit a particular proficiency level, the learners above and below the defined proficiency level are not catered to adequately. This has a serious impact especially on the weaker learners who are totally dependent on the EGAP programme to improve their academic language skills. Further, the disciplinary specificity and the relevant language skills pose a challenge when those are catered to through an EGAP programme. Moreover, it is questionable whether the learners are able to effectively transfer the generic skills into
disciplinary contexts. Being very structured, the inclusions and expansion of the EGAP programme in terms of content and duration, face practical and logistical issues. At the same time, it can be assumed that adaptation, supplementation and the use of creative teaching approaches may have the potential to bridge the existing gaps in the EGAP program in general and EGAP materials in particular.

Even at the tertiary level, a majority of the Sri Lankan students tend to be heavily dependent on text based materials and teacher support to learn English. It can be assumed that the reason for this may be mainly the influence of their traditional school education. Lack of awareness about the distance mode learning among the learners who enrol for DE courses also seems to be a major reason for this. As such, even DE at OUSL tends to depend on text based learning materials supported by AV (audio-visual) resources. The modern innovations in DE seem to be quite far away from the existing scenario, though attempts are being made to incorporate online and blended learning into the programmes. Hence, texts/course books become the central aspect of learning. As a point of departure, it would be crucial to assess the impact of course books, and their role as the linking factor with other course dimensions, in the path to reaching more current and resourceful modes of learning languages in DE.

Materials play a central role as the main element in the wider course experience. At the same time, the role of the materials and their learning outcome are dependent on many other aspects of the course. Hence, materials should be evaluated in relation to other interacting factors to critically assess the impact of materials on the learning outcome. In this context, materials of EGAP are evaluated and appraised to situate them in the context of the language learning in distance education in terms of their efficacy and contribution towards achieving the set objectives. Further, the materials are appraised in the context of the process of course evaluation to emphasize their role and importance in the wider course experience. The materials are appraised in terms of the following aspects;

- as SIM in fostering learner autonomy;
- as EGAP materials in improving academic language skills;
• as a main element in creating a learner-context interface, to create a dynamic process of learning;
• as materials to build language competency and capacity;
• as tools that have the potential to help the teacher be a facilitator and to extend learner-centred teaching to learning-centred teaching.

The main argument that shapes the literature review is that materials in distance education play the central and the most crucial role in linking all the other course dimensions. Hence, role of the materials should be very dynamic and interactive. With long term objectives and effective incorporation of those into materials, it can be argued that materials have the potential to build up a continuous learning process that extends through and beyond the stipulated courses. Further, materials in DE should be geared to fulfil the role of creating an effective interface between the stake holders and the context which will lead to the dynamic and resourceful process of language learning in DE. The teachers being the interface between learners and the learning resources, need to develop autonomy and critical reflection in order to foster those traits in the learners. Further, the necessity to cater effectively to the discipline specific academic language skills forms another argument in the research study.

2.2 Review of theories and research work in the field

In discussing theories of second language learning, Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2013) have described theory as a "more or less abstract set of claims about the entities which are significant within the phenomenon under study, the relationship which exists between them and processes which bring about the change". As such, theory aims not just at description, but also at explanation. They further elaborate that "theories may be embryonic in scope or more elaborate, explicit and comprehensive". Further, theories may deal with different areas of interest and also the nature of theory may vary depending on the focus. Further, they emphasize that worthwhile theories are "collaboratively produced and evolve through a process of systematic enquiry, in which the claims of the theory are assessed against some kind of data or evidence". In the current study, relevant theories are looked at in order to see the links between the
prevailing practical situations, the evidence, observations and to what extent they go in line with or deviate from the relevant theories.

2.2.1 Theories of distance education

The demand for open and distance learning is gaining momentum in the present day context. This in turn has created increased opportunities for language learning in distance mode. "The development in new technologies, the emergence of virtual learning environments and the demand for life-long, flexible learning opportunities have given rise to a marked increase in language learning in distance education-both in terms of new providers and new participants" (White, 2005. p. 55). It is further noted that "while at one time distance education struggled for recognition, the viability of distance learning environments for language learning is now well established" (ibid. p. 55).

Distance education is in the process of building up leadership in the broader field of education. Garrison (2000), is of the view that diversity and choice reflected in theories of DE incorporating new technology and approaches contributed to building up leadership. The choice and diversity itself prove to be the strength of the distance educational system provided it is used with proper planning and understanding. This could be related closely with the language learning situation in OUSL given the diverse nature of the background and the requirements of learner clientele. The inadequacy of choice to provide services to the diverse needs lead to restriction in the outreach and the expected outcome.

2.2.1.1 Holmberg: The conversational model of distance education

Borje Holmberg, a pioneering theorist in distance education and distance language learning developed a philosophy based on humanism and andragogical theory. He urged for the need for focus on the notions of independence in language learning and teaching as a base in theory building. He argued for the need for distance learners to be helped to achieve independence. Holmberg challenged the position on learner independence adopted by many distance education institutions based on the assumed prevalence of students’ capacity to work independently. On the contrary he argues for learner
independence within a context of ongoing conversation between the teacher and the learner, underpinned by various support mechanisms. Independence is viewed as an ideal situation that needs to be fostered through support by institutions and further, should be present in, and central to all forms of provision.

"The emphasis of the work of Holmberg lies on the content and conversational character of the course materials as a means of fostering learner independence" (White, 2005, p. 57). Holmberg argues that guided pedagogic conversation can be enhanced by well developed self-instructional materials and as such, it is the responsibility of the course developer to simulate a conversation with the learner through materials. This theory further highlighted the importance of learner support and encouragement within well organized instructional programmes.

As such the Holmberg's theory of the conversational model of distance education promotes the idea of ongoing dialogue between teacher and the learner and an empathetic approach on the part of teachers towards learners taking into consideration their individual needs and differences. As further pointed out by White (2005, p.57), it stressed on the fact that learner autonomy is an ideal that needs to be promoted and fostered by the institutions through support that should be present in, and central to all forms of provision. The guided conversational model of distance education and the importance of an empathetic approach have informed many of the innovations in course design and in teacher-learner interactions. In essence, the conversational model of Holmberg stresses on the learner independence fostered through continual dialogue, meaningful interaction and institutional support. The learner needs and an empathetic view on the part of teacher to the context, situation and characteristics of each student, are also highlighted as core aspects of the model.

**2.2.1.2 Moore: transactional distance theory**

Michael Moore's theory of transactional distance education is one of the first theories to move its focus away from the physical separation of the teacher and the learner. His focus was on the distance within the distance education and its impact on the teaching-learning
procedure. As explained by Moore, transactional distance refers to the communicative and psychological distance between teachers and learners and this is seen as more significant than the physical separation between teachers and learners.

As further elaborated by Moore (c.f. White, 2005, p. 58), transactional distance is a function of two variables: dialogue: purposeful, constructive interaction valued by both parties towards improved understanding), and structure (the rigidity or flexibility of course objectives, strategies and forms of evaluations and assessments). The transactional distance, in any teaching learning environment is dependent on whether the students are left alone with their materials or whether they are engaged in a meaningful interaction with their teacher (dialogue) and the structure of the programme (the degree to which the program is prescribed or pre-planned).

Moore argues that learner autonomy “may be enhanced by high and low transactional distance depending on the preference of the learner thus relating and building up a link between learner autonomy and transactional distance”. According to Moore's view, learner autonomy is at its highest when learners decide their own learning paths and aims, and where they are not restricted when learning either by dialogue or prescribed structure. He also argues for the point that distance learner is not an isolated individual in terms of learning and is constantly challenged to adapt to influences and changes in his/her learning environments.

Moore's arguments reflect a shift in focus of the debate on autonomy towards a focus on educational relationships and interactions. In his view, autonomy is perceived as the potential of DE to be both personalized as well as to encompass many forms of interdependence (tutor-learner, learner-learner, learner- learning group)

2.2.1.3 Peters: The industrial model of distance education

Otto Peters, in theoretical terms has represented DE as an industrialized form of teaching and learning. In this model, he emphasized that DE was characterized by division of labour and development of instructional units which could be mass produced and
distributed by standardized delivery, thus achieving economies of scale. The ultimate target of this approach is to reduce the unit cost.

The structural constraints and the reliance on self-instructional print packages, made this for Peters, the ideal context to adopt industrial approaches to education. While this model had a huge impact on DE, it was not a theory of teaching nor of learning, but rather a contribution to clear thought about the organization of distance education. However, as pointed out by Garrison (2000), it had considerable influence on the creation of the British Open University in the early 1970s, and, in many ways, to this day, it dominates the field of distance education.

The industrial model of Peters is an organizational model and is about organizing the educational process to realize economies of scale. As such, in this model, teaching and learning issues are not of special relevance. As explained by Garrison (2000), Peters (1994a) describes the industrial approach as “objectification of the teaching process” (p.111 c.f. Garrison, 2000). According to Peters (1994b), it “reduces the forms of shared learning, and keeps learners away from personal interactions and critical discourse” (c.f. Garrison, 2000, p.16). For this reason, Peters did not advocate this approach for all of distance education.

Garrison (2000) further elaborates that dominance of structural and organizational concerns of the industrial model, over teaching and learning issues, is central to understanding theoretical developments and the challenges we face in developing DE theory in this century. He further explains that industrial model placed in clear contrast, situation in having to choose between independence and interaction and established a constructive debate over the years regarding the inherent trade-off of these issues (Daniel and Marquis, 1979, c.f. Garrison, 2000). In the current scenario, the advent of computer mediated communication (CMC) has rendered this debate more relevant as it has made possible both an independent and a collaborative learning experience.
According to Garrison, Peter's core philosophical position is reflected in some of his recent work. He further explains that due to unprecedented changes in society, Peters (2000) offers a new structure for university education to include three basic forms of academic learning; “self-learning, tele-learning and social intercourse” (p.15, c.f. Garrison, 2000 ). In this Peters extends independent forms of learning at a distance (i.e., self-learning and tele-learning) with the inclusion of social intercourse. As pointed out by Garrison, his argument is that communication technology and lifelong learning demands will precipitate a “transformation of the traditional university [and, presumably, all higher education] into an institution of self-study and distance teaching” (Peters, 2000, p. 20. c.f. Garrison, 2000). From Peter's perspective, self-learning and tele-learning are very much autonomous approaches to learning.

As observed by Garrison, Peters promoted and remained an advocate of, self-study, although enhanced with social intercourse defined in a non-formal and individually controlled manner. As he further explains, though a new recognition for interaction is evident, there is still a strong identification with the ideal of independence consistent with his industrial model. His social intercourse seems to support a general social presence among learners rather than academic critical discourse.

The point Peters (2000) raise is that face-to-face discussion “can only be reproduced in part, and indeed in a reduced form, by mediated means” (p. 17. c.f. Garrison, 2000), which proves to be an important point. Here Peters identifies an important area of needed theory development when he rightly notes the difficulty of replicating face-to-face interaction by mediated means. In fact, Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000 c.f. Garrison, 2000) are studying the issue of learning in a text-based environment in the context of 'Computer Mediated Communication' (CMC). The theoretical analysis suggests that face-to-face interaction cannot be reproduced in whole within a text-based environment. The communication characteristics are very different and, therefore, the nature of the educational experience will be altered but not necessarily in a negative manner. However, Garrison et al. (2000) argue that a text-based environment may have an inherent communicative advantage in supporting critical discourse in a community of
inquiry. Garrison concludes that regardless, these questions point to the importance of studying emerging issues such as the characteristics of spoken and written communication for the development of theory that helps distance education practitioners understand the use of mediated communication for educational purposes.

2.2.1.4 Garrison: The theory of collaborative control

As viewed by White (2005), the theory of control put forward by Garrison and Baynton (1987) challenged the conception and practice of distance education as a private form of learning which is based on self-instructional texts. As she further observes, excessive concern with independence as a desirable goal for distance education, it was argued, has seldom been balanced against a concern for support and recognition of the demands placed on the learner. Garrison’s approach of collaborative control reflected an emerging emphasis on direct communication between teachers and students and also interaction between groups of learners and the teacher. As explained in Garrison’s theory of collaborative control, interaction is the means by which control is developed and maintained by the learner and control does not require a form of self-reliance which excludes all external interaction and resources. On the contrary, through communication the learner and the teacher can negotiate the degree of control each has over the learning process. In this context, control is essentially collaborative, in that it is dependent on both the teacher and the learner, though it exists separately from either of them. Control is not transferred automatically to a student solely by giving freedom of choice as to time and place of learning without consideration of the student’s abilities and resources. Control is negotiated continuously through sustained interaction. (Garrison 1989:33 c. f. White, 2005). As further observed by White (2005), the aim of this communication is to enable the learner to negotiate and develop control through ongoing collaboration.

The theoretical work of Garrison and his co-researchers marks a hallmark in the field. It shift the focus from a concern with organizational issues to what Garrison (2000) calls ‘transactional issues’ relating to sustained interactions at a distance which take place within a community of learners. White further explains that theoretical work of Garrison also addresses the relationship between the development of theory and different
paradigms of distance education. Garrison (1997, c.f. White, 2005) notes that alongside the dominant paradigm in distance education which has stressed on independent learning carried out principally through self-instructional materials, there is what can be called an emerging paradigm of distance education. As she further elaborates, this paradigm places much greater emphasis on interaction and the construction of knowledge, and is aligned with constructivist approaches within distance education. As such the work of Garrison and his co-researchers has contributed towards a paradigm shift in DE.

As presented by Garrison (2000), the theoretical model proposed by Garrison and Baynton (1987) and updated by Garrison (1989) reflects the assumptions of this paradigmatic shift. This model of the educational transaction at a distance placed the concept of control at the centre of the transaction. As observed by Garrison, control was defined as the opportunity and ability to influence the educational transaction and this was intended to replace the concept of independence (self-study), often a core element of distance education with a more comprehensive perspective of the educational transaction. As further elaborated by Garrison (2000), "shared control was seen to be reflective of the transactional nature of an educational experience. Two-way communication is central to control and at variance with independence that has the effect of reducing the legitimate and worthwhile role of the teacher and, thereby, risking isolation".

As further stressed on by Garrison, the control model places within the macro-structural level of teacher, student and content the micro-level transactional elements of proficiency (ability and motivation), support (human and non-human resources), and independence (opportunity to choose).These transactional elements "will determine the appropriate balance of control which can only be assessed and constantly adjusted through sustained two-way communication". Garrison further observes that independence necessitated by structural constraints reflects only one set of variables to be considered in a complex educational transaction.

As observed by White (2005), given that in reality programmes of study frequently incorporate elements from both paradigms of distance education, the challenge for theory
is to encompass the range of practices which are developing in the wide variety of contexts which exist for distance education.

### 2.2.2 Distance learner

Distance language learners are diverse and unique compared to conventional learners in terms of many learner dimensions involved. The choice and flexibility in distance learning system and different contexts contribute to create this diversity. Understanding distance language learner is complex yet essential to inform the process of course design. According to current trends in distance language learning, the concept of distance language learning as a system is gradually shifting focus to a concept of distance language learning as a dynamic process. As such the aspects of course design, teaching and modifications should focus on the changing nature and changing needs of the distance learner as they progress through the process of distance language learning. As pointed out by White (2003), the support of the teacher is essential for the learner to go through this dynamic process successfully by developing an effective interface between the elements in the learning context. This would in turn provide a strong base to acquire the skills of the target language (TL). An understanding of the learners as they go through the course is critical to inform course design as well as to inform course delivery and interactions.

White (2003), has further pointed out learner awareness as a crucial factor in facing the challenges and constraints in distance language learning. She argues that courses should be designed to suit the individual learner and not to fit the learners into courses. This fact is highlighted through many scholarly arguments. Doughty and Long (2002, c.f. White, 2003), identify developing knowledge of learners as one of the key issues in adopting a task-based approach to language teaching in distance context. It is argued that a task-based approach draws on and reflects a more humanistic and experiential traditions in language teaching. Nunan (1999 b, 148. c.f. White, 2003), further challenges the unitary approach to syllabus design and course development in which "learners were fed an undifferentiated linguistic diet regardless of their communicative needs".
According Candlin and Byrnes (1995:11 c.f. White, 2003), the delivery of distance language programmes has generally been characterized by mass production of materials, a centralization of decision-making about learning and a pervasive requirement for programmes to accommodate to rapidly changing technological advances which have their own particular orientation to learning. In this context, less attention is paid to the learner factors like motivation, individual differences and learner attitudes when designing materials and in course delivery. As such Candlin and Byrnes (1995:9, c.f. White, 2003), suggest a more learner-focused approach to distance language learning which recognizes the following:

- the importance of flexibility and negotiation;
- the centrality of highlighting and developing cognitive and attitudinal processes;
- the importance of learner motivation.

It is emphasized that a practical knowledge and awareness of distance language learners is a crucial factor to facilitate such an approach and also of changing needs of the individual learners as they progress through the course. While focus is much on the potential language learner in DE, the actual learner and ground realities tend to be given less attention.

2.2.3 Facilitator in DE

Distance language learning is a unique learning experience in which the teaching-learning process is defined by the context. The teacher's role in distance education is shaped by the materials specific to distance education and the nature of the teacher-student interaction. According to White (2003), if learners are to become full beneficiaries of, and active partners of, and active partners within, distance learning environments they need to be supported in finding ways of effectively managing themselves and their learning experiences. She further explains that "distance learners may not be aware of time, energy and mental resources they will need to devote to
establishing an effective interface with the new learning context” (White, 2003, p. 98). The contribution of the teacher includes:

- understanding of the importance of developing a learner-context interface;
- readiness to help learners, where ever possible, to accommodate them in the process of developing the interface;
- responsiveness to the interface each learner develops;
- flexibility in shaping aspects of the context (e.g. learner support) to align with the ways of working developed by the learners;
- ability and willingness to develop and improve contextual conditions, which are conducive to enhancing the learner-context interface;
- guiding learners in the advancing process of the interaction with the context. (White, 2003, p. 98)

The ability of the teacher to understand and adjust to the context is crucial in ensuring success in learning. This include the awareness of the specific contexts, the learner differences and the ability and flexibility of teachers to adapt to those accordingly. It has been noted that "principled teaching is not about pre-packaged methodological products, however, but the individual teacher's construction of personal, context specific frameworks which allow him or her to select and combine compatible procedures and materials in systematic ways for a local context" (Hyland, 2006, p. 89). As he further elaborates, the specialized knowledge and learning processes from the disciplines that learners bring into their EAP classes, has an influence on the more general frameworks adopted in teaching. The teacher can effectively grasp these traits to develop the learners' understanding of discourse in various ways, drawing on concepts of consciousness raising, scaffolding, collaboration, socio-literacy and concordancing.

### 2.2.4 Self-instructional materials

Teaching materials play an important role in most language programs. They are also a main component in those courses in terms of providing the basis for learners' language input in the classroom. Materials can be in the form of textbooks, institutionally-prepared
materials or the teacher's own. "In the case of inexperienced teachers, materials may not serve as a form of teacher training-they provide ideas on how to plan and teach lessons". (Richards, 2001, p. 251)

In order to acquire the skills and knowledge that are necessary, "distance learners need to become involved and motivated by the instructional materials. Therefore, distance education materials take a learner-entered approach rather than a traditional content-centered approach of textbooks" (Ariadurai, et al, 2005). The views in Race (1994), further reflects on textbook as resources which is used in an open and distance learning approach, and learners who need and interested to increase their knowledge may benefit from the way they use printed resource materials. "They may need definite things to help the ‘learn by doing’. They may particularly need the benefit of receiving the feedback on what they do as they learn. They may need their ‘want to learn’ to be continually ‘amplified and reinforced'" (Race, 1994, p.57),

Effectiveness and success of any distance education program is much dependent on the quality of course materials. "Well designed, interactive course material, either in print or electronic technology based, is the foundation for successful teaching and learning in all flexible learning modes" (Kuruba, 2004, c.f. Ariadurai et al. 2005). The quality of self-instructional material can be considered as the key issue, out of many factors that influence the overall quality of distance education courses.

According to Murphy (2000, c.f. Ariadurai et al, 2005), effective distance education materials are guided by precise objectives. Activities should be used to help break the content into suitable learning blocks. They should encourage, motivate and enable the students to gauge their understanding and progress. Murphy further comments that the instructions should be clear and the questions should be answerable, unless they are being used to develop critical thinking. The writers should keep in mind that the student is likely to be studying in isolation and the materials have to compete with many other demands on their time. Hence, for learning to be efficient and effective, developers of DE
materials need to create the same interactional situation on paper using an informal friendly tone.

"Unlike self-access and tandem learning, which are often viewed as means to the end of learner autonomy, distance learning and self-instruction are viewed more as situations in which learners are required to learn autonomously" (Benson, 2005). As further elaborated by Benson, distance learning materials are purpose designed self-instructional materials due to the requirement of the learners to be engaged in more self-studies and the limited interactions with the relevant distance educational institution.

The Open University of United Kingdom (OUUK) has introduced many innovative approaches to designing course materials in Spanish Language diploma course, with the aim of fostering learner autonomy.

1. Objectives clearly explained so that students can feel they have ownership of the syllabus, and so they can plan their learning.

2. The possibility of doing further work on the areas of difficulty - individualized homework.

3. Activities or tasks that enable students to transfer what they have learned to other contexts (in particular to contexts that are relevant to their own needs and interests)

4. Learner training that is specific enough to solve specific problems where ever and wherever they appear. Constant and varied suggestions for learning strategies so students can experiment and find those that work best for them.

5. Opportunities for students to think how they learn - in the form of a learning diary.

6. Opportunities for self-evaluation and self-assessment, both through course activities and tasks, and through the formal assessment strategy.

7. Opportunities for students to relate what they are learning to what they already know, in the form of language awareness activities.

2.2.5 Principles of access-self materials/SIM

As pointed out by Tomlinson (2011), access-self materials refer to "practice exercises which enable the learners to work on what they need in their own time and at their own pace without reference to a teacher. Such materials attempt to achieve the desirable objective of learner centred and learner invested activity". According to Tomlinson, access-self activities are based on a set of principles.

Access-self activities should:

1. Be self-access in the conventional sense of providing opportunities for the learners to choose what to work on and to do so in their own time at their own pace.
2. Be open-ended in the sense that they do not have correct and incorrect answers, but rather permit a variety of acceptable responses.
3. Engage the learners’ individuality in the activities in such a way as to exploit their prior experience and to provide opportunities for personal development.
4. Involve the learners as human beings rather than just as language learners.
5. Require a personal investment of energy and attention in order for learner discoveries to be made.
6. Stimulate various right and left-brain activities at the same time and thus maximize the brain’s potential for learning and development.
7. Provide a rich, varied and comprehensible input in order to facilitate informal acquisition.

As posited by Tomlinson, the ultimate aim is to develop both the declarative and procedural knowledge of the learners, as well as making a positive and broadening contribution to their education.

2.2.6 Features of access-self materials

Tomlinson (2011) points out the features of access-self materials.

1. The materials provide extensive exposure to authentic English through purposeful reading and/or listening activities.
2. Whilst-reading/listening activities are offered to facilitate interaction with the text(s).
3. The post-reading/listening activities first of all elicit global, holistic responses which involve interaction between the self and the text (Tomlinson, 2003 b).
4. The focus of the main responsive activities is on the development of such high-level skills as imaging, inferencing, connecting, interpreting and evaluating.
5. There are also activities which help the learners to fix selective attention in such a way that they can discover something new about the specific features of the text and thus become aware of any mismatch between their competence and equivalent performance of target language users.
6. Production activities involve the use of target language in order to achieve situational purposes rather than just to practice specific linguistic features of the target language. The activities offer involvement in various types of personal expression.
7. The learners are given plenty of opportunities to make choices which suit their linguistic level, their preferred learning styles, their level of involvement in the text and the time they have available.
8. Whereas self-access activities are typically private and individual, access-self activities include the possibility of like-minded learners working together without reference to a teacher. That way the learners are able to choose between the tailor-made benefits of private work and the opportunity to pool resources and energy with fellow learners.
9. Feedback is given through commentaries rather than answer keys.
10. Learner training is encouraged through activities which involve the learners in thinking about the learning process and in experiencing a variety of different types of learning activities from which they can later make informed choices in determining their route through the access-self materials.
11. Suggestions for individual follow-up activities are given at the end of each unit.
Self-access materials have many features in terms of their function (what the learner can do with them);

- Decide on what to do; this may include decisions on what objectives to work on, what particular skill area to work on and so on.
- Find the appropriate materials to work on for the objectives decided on, or do further practice on something that was begun in class.
- Use the materials; this includes such matters as knowing how to do first, and next as well as how to assess yourself on the achievement of the objectives.
  (Dickinson, 1987)

### 2.2.7 Role of SIM in distance education

The kind of materials we use in classroom are influenced by the purpose they serve. Further, they work as a framework for guidance, a stimulus for learning, help for collaboration and scaffolding, materials for reference etc. The materials used in EAP instruction, as elaborated by Hyland (2006), plays many roles;

1. **Language scaffolding.** Sources of language examples, for discussion, analysis, exercises etc.
2. **Models.** Sample texts provide exemplars of rhetorical forms or structures of target genres.
3. **Reference.** Typically set or web-based information, explanations and examples of relevant grammatical, rhetorical or stylistic forms.
4. **Stimulus.** Sources of ideas and content to stimulate discussions and writing and to support project work. Generally tasks but can include video, graphic or audio material, items of realia, internet materials or lectures.


Hyland further elaborates that the kind of materials used for scaffolding involve the learners in thinking about and using the language while supporting their evolving control of different texts. those materials should provide the learners with opportunities for discussion, guided writing, analysis and manipulation of salient structures and
vocabulary. Ideally these materials are expected to provide a range of texts and sources, should be flexible in format and provide learners with a sense of progression.

Models, as described by Hyland are representative samples to illustrate a particular feature of a text. Generally students are required to examine several examples of a genre to identify its structure, the ways meanings are expressed and the possible variations. The samples of materials used as models help increase students' awareness of how texts are organized and how objectives are realized. As such the texts selected should be both relevant to the students, representative of the genres of their target contexts and be authentic, created to be used in real-world contexts.

Reference materials as described by Hyland focus on knowledge rather than practice. This category includes a range of materials including grammars, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, style guides etc. but all function to support the learner's understanding of language through explanations, examples and advice.

The materials that stimulate the thinking power and creativity in students can lead to more independent and autonomous learning. As explained by Hyland, such materials involve learners in thinking about using language by stimulating ideas, encouraging connections with their experiences, and developing topics in ways that articulate their ideas. As he further clarifies, such materials provide content schemata and a reason to communicate, stimulating creativity, planning and engagement with others. Stimulus materials can include a full range of items varying from texts to AV and online materials. More detailed and explicit materials offer a greater support for relatively unambiguous and structured ways of stimulating language use whereas materials which are open to many interpretations, such as a collection of divergent views on a topic, allows room for students to exercise their creativity and imagination in their responses.

2.3 Materials development and evaluation

Course materials are the tangible products of curriculum development and course design activities (Russo and Olivitt, 2006). As further elaborated by them, given the diverse
nature of course materials, it is not possible to develop a check-list of the features of good course materials. Even the notion of 'good' can be problematic but tools like checklists can be useful in developing good course materials, they should be used in combination with more contextualized and participatory materials development processes.

Drawing from research evidence, Russo and Olivitt (2006), highlight some important dimensions of good course materials. Materials should:

- be aligned with all other dimensions of the course process;
- be responsive to the context in which they will be used;
- be supportive of participation and co-learning;
- be clear and accessible;
- integrate theory and practice (praxis); and
- develop critical reflection and reflexivity.

Figure 2.1- Role of course materials in the course process

Course materials are only one dimension of the course process, but are responsible for connecting all other dimensions and presenting the course as a coherent whole.
2.3.1 Principles of materials development

Materials development is both a field of study and a practical undertaking. As a field it studies the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching materials. As an undertaking it involves the production, evaluation and adaption of language teaching materials, by teachers for their own classrooms and by materials writers for sale or distribution. Ideally these two aspects of materials development are interactive in that the theoretical studies inform and are informed by the development and use of classroom materials.

Tomlinson, 2001. p. 66

As pointed out by McGrath (2013), the ESL/EFL teachers are defined by one common factor; whether they are native speakers of English or not, they teach learners who are not speakers of English as a first language. Irrespective of many varying factors like the teachers’ level of education, training, experience their personal characteristics and the contexts in which they teach. As such, teaching and learning English as a second language is a common factor that underlies any learning situation in the country.

Learning styles and preferences research show many learners in Asia to be dependent learners (Read, 1993. c.f. Mukundan, 2010, in Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2010) and this implies that these learners depend very much on the teacher and the book. A book that is inefficiently produced will not help dependent learners.

As posited by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010), some claims most persuasively supported by recent research on materials development are;

1. Authentic texts and tasks stimulate language acquisition, if they are relevant and engaging.
2. Exposure to language in use is vital for language acquisition.
3. Using the language for communication is vital for language acquisition.
4. Experiential approaches to language learning facilitate language acquisition.
5. Helping learners to make discoveries for themselves is an important role for language teachers.

6. Helping learners to think critically and creatively is an important role for language teachers.

Recent research studies have revealed that authentic texts used in materials are more popular among the teachers and learners who experienced them. Further, exposure to language in use is claimed to be a pre-requisite for language acquisition but this claim needs further research to ground it more firmly among the practitioners and publishers.

When developing course material it is important to know the context in which the course will be implemented. Contextual factors influence aspects of course material development such as language use, type of format of material, teaching and learning strategies and the selection of activities. The main contextual factors that affect the materials development can be categorized as learner profile, institutional setting, sociocultural background and logistical considerations.

**Learner profile**

- What prior knowledge and experience learners bring to the class?
- What are learners’ expectations?
- What are the required levels of academic and practical performance?
- What levels of literacy can be expected?
- Are learners employed or unemployed, and how might this affect the way they interact with the course?

**Institutional**

- Is the organization/funder sending learners on the course or are learners self motivated?
- Are there any institutional priorities that need consideration?
- Are there any institutional/funding expectations that compliment or contradict the course ethos and objectives?
- Have similar courses been offered to these learners before/ How did they go?
• Do practicalities in the work place affect time frames, delivery modes, levels of support, etc.?

**Socio-Cultural**

• Are there any cultural/political practices or biases that might affect the way course materials are developed and responded to?
• Are there any gender roles or biases to which the course material should be sensitive?
• What language and meaning-making conventions might affect the way the course materials are received?
• How knowledge is viewed, and does this influence the way tutors and learners interact? Does it diminish or exaggerate the course status or credibility?

**Logistical**

• What are time frames and what type of materials support delivery within these constraints?
• Do finances allow for color printing, inclusion of CD-ROMs, creative binding, etc.?

(Russo and Olvitt, 2006)

According to Tikoo (2003), from language teachers’ perspective, the course books/textbooks act as;

• syllabus substitutes; they show what to teach and in many cases, in what order to teach it;
• readily available sources of texts and tasks;
• inexpensive sources of materials for use inside the class-room and by individual learners on their own;
• compendiums of tasks and activities which teachers may use, or preferably, build upon in order to select or produce additional inputs;
• primary sources of support to individual students’ efforts at preparing for tests and examinations;
repositories of readable materials at the appropriate level; they often become models for learners’ own language use.

Such views can give greater insights into how materials should be designed and developed. This can provide the base for SIM which should further be adapted in line with the mode of delivery (DE).

Tomlinson (2013), has identified the future trends and requirements in materials development based on the relevant literature and research evidence. Accordingly the expected development in materials development can be given as follows:

- even greater personalization and localization of materials;
- greater flexibility of materials and creativity in their use;
- more respect for the learners’ intelligence, experience and communicative competence;
- more affectively engaging content;
- a greater emphasis on multicultural perspectives and awareness;
- more opportunities for learners with experiential (and especially kinesthetic) learning style preferences;
- more attempts made to engage the learner in the language learning as an experienced, intelligent and interesting individual;
- more attempts made to use multidimensional approaches to language learning (Tomlinson, 2010).

2.3.2 Materials evaluation

As described by Tomlinson (2013), materials evaluation is a process that involves measuring the value (potential value) of a set of learning materials. It involves making judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them and it tries to measure some or all the following:

- the appeal of the materials to the learners;
• the credibility of materials to the learners, teachers and administrators;
• the validity of the materials (i.e. Is what the teacher worth teaching?);
• the reliability of the materials (i.e. Would they have the same effect with different groups of target learners?);
• the ability of the materials to interest learners and the teachers;
• the ability of the materials to motivate the learners;
• the value of the materials in terms of short-term learning (important, for example, for performance on tests and examinations);
• the value of materials in terms of long-term learning (of both language and communication skills);
• the learners' perceptions of the value of the materials;
• the teachers' perceptions of the value of the materials;
• the assistance given to the teachers in terms of preparation, delivery and assessment;
• the flexibility of the materials (e.g. the extent to which it is easy for a teacher to adapt the materials to suit a particular context);
• the contribution made by the materials for teacher development;
• the match with administrative requirements (e.g. standardization across classes, coverage of a syllabus, preparation for and examination).

Tomlinson (2013), further observes that it is obvious from a consideration of the effects above that no two evaluations can be the same, as the needs, objectives, backgrounds and preferred styles of the participants will differ from context to context. The main point raised here is that it is not the materials which are being evaluated but their effect on the people who come into contact with them (including the evaluators). As such, this point highlights the fact that the contextual factors that impact on the learners as well as the interaction of the learners with the materials and the context forms the deciding and defining aspect of the learning outcome.
2.3.3 Principles of materials evaluation

As observed by Tomlinson (2013), most of the evaluations are impressionistic or at best are aided by an ad hoc and very subjective set of criteria. It is suggested that evaluations need to be driven by a set of principles and these principles are articulated by the evaluator(s). In this way greater validity and reliability is ensured and fewer mistakes are likely to be made.

Further, Tomlinson (2013) has pointed out that many researchers have argued that it is useful for teachers to try to achieve an articulation of their theories by reflecting on their practice. He further argues that the starting point of any evaluation should be reflection on the evaluator's practice leading to articulation of evaluator's theories of learning and teaching. Considering this, he further proposes the following points on learning and teaching which could be useful in developing a set of principles for materials evaluation. The following theories have been articulated through reflective practice of many teachers;

- Language learners succeed best if learning is positive, relaxed and enjoyable experience.
- Language teachers tend to teach more successfully if they enjoy their role and if they can gain some enjoyment themselves from the materials they are using.
- Learning materials lose credibility for learners if they suspect that the teacher does not value them.
- Each learner varies from day to day in terms of motivation, attitude, mood, perceived needs and wants, enthusiasm and energy.
- There are superficial cultural differences between learners from different countries (and these differences need to be respected and catered for) but there are also strong universal determinants of successful language learning and teaching.
- Successful language learning in a classroom (especially large classes) depends on the generation and maintenance of high levels of energy.
- Learners only want what they really need or want to learn.
• Learners often say that what they want is focused language practice but they often seem to gain more enjoyment and learning from activities which stimulate them to use the target language to say something they want to say.

• Learners think, say and learn more if they are given an experience or text to respond to than if they are just asked for their views, opinions and interests.

• The most important thing learning materials have to do is to help the learner connect the learning experiences in the classroom to their own life outside the course.

• The more novel (or better still bizarre) the learning experience is the more impact it is likely to contribute to long-term acquisition.

• The most important result that learning materials can achieve is to engage the emotions of learners. Laughter, joy, excitement, sorrow and anger can promote learning. Neutrality, numbness and nullity cannot.

Tomlinson (2013), further stresses on the fact that materials design should focus more on a holistic approach towards language learning rather than a discrete approach. Further, it is suggested that flexibility and choice are important in language learning and materials should offer affective engagement to both learner and the teacher.

Tomlinson (2013), stresses that research into learning is controversial as it involves many variables and many variations occur due to local learning environment. He further presents some research findings on learning theories which are convincing and applicable according to his perception;

• Deep input is required for effective and durable learning to take place. Such processing is semantic in that the focus of the learner is on the meaning of the intake and in particular on its relevance to the learner.

• Affective engagement is also essential for effective and durable learning. Having positive attitudes towards the learning experience and developing self-esteem while learning are important determiners of successful learning. And so is emotional involvement. Emotions must be 'considered as essential part of learning' (Williams and Burden, 1997, p. 28) as 'they are the very centre of human
mental life...they link what is important for us to the world of people, things and happenings' (Oately and Jenkins, 1996, p. 122).

- Making mental connections is a crucial aspect of the learning process. In order for learning to be successful, connections need to be made between the new and the familiar, what is being learned and the learner's life and between the learning experience and its potential value in the future.

- Experiential learning is essential (though not necessarily sufficient) and in particular, apprehension should come to the learner before comprehension (Kolb, 1984; Kelly, 1997; Tomlinson and Mashuhara, 2010; Kolb and Kolb, 2009). Learners will only learn if they need and want to learn and if they are willing to invest time and energy in the process. In other words, both instrumental and integrative motivation are vital contributors to learning success (Dornyei and Ushioda, 2009).

- Multidimensional processing of intake is essential for successful learning. This involves the learner in creating a mental representation of the intake through such mental processes like sensory imaging (especially visualization) and affective association and the use of the inner voice. As Berman (1999, p.2) says, 'we learn best when we see things as part of a recognized pattern, when our imagination are aroused, when we make natural associations between one idea and another, and when the information appeals to our senses. One of the best ways of achieving multidimensional representation in learning seems to be a whole person approach which helps the learner to respond to the learning experience with emotions, attitudes, opinions and ideas (Jacobs and Schuman, 1992; Schumann, 1997, 1999; Arnold, 199).

- Materials which address the learner in an informal, personal voice are more likely to facilitate learning than which are distant, formal voice (Beck et al., 1995; Tomlinson, 2001b). Features which seem to contribute to a successful personal voice include such aspects of orality as:
  - Informal discourse features (e.g. contracted forms, ellipsis, informal lexis)
  - The active rather than the passive voice
  - Concreteness (e.g. examples, anecdotes)
Inclusiveness (e.g. not signaling intellectual, linguistic or cultural superiority over the learners)
- sharing experiences and opinions
- Sometimes including casual redundancies rather than always being concise (Tomlinson, 2001b)

Materials evaluation forms a central part of the wider context of course evaluation. The total learning outcome of the materials is dependent on the materials, the negotiation of the stake holders with the materials and numerous interacting factors that add to the teaching-learning experience. As such, situating the materials evaluation in the wider experience of course evaluation helps to get a clear view of the role and impact of materials in context.

2.3.4 Course Evaluation in Distance Education

Thompson, et.al (2003), in the article ‘Evaluating Distance Education Programs (Hand Book of Distance Education, 567-584)’, observe the changes taken place over time in the concepts, practices and evaluation processes in distance education. Accordingly, within traditional institutions, the impact of distance education programming on the institutional system as a whole was small though it had a significant impact on individuals. This minimal impact tended to restrict the interest of parent institution of monitoring and evaluation of distance education programs and primarily evaluation was done for the purpose of ensuring that such programs did not detract them from the reputation enjoyed by its traditional programming.

For this reason, decades of evaluation studies focused on demonstrating that the distance education programs were ‘as good’ – that is, that students learned as much in them – as resident instruction programs. The primary approach used was the media comparison study, which pitted classroom based instruction against technologically mediated instruction. Comparable outcomes were documented in hundreds of such studies.
Institutions dedicated to distance education made a similar attempt to demonstrate parity with traditional institutions. They like distance education programs in traditional institutions, fought for credibility from established entities that undervalued non-traditional study and therefore distance study. Thus, whether the distance education program was offered by a traditional institution or an institution specializing in such programming, its evaluation was defensively focused on presenting data that would allow its continued existence, if only on the margins.

Currently the situation has changed drastically and distance education has been revolutionized by the power and reach of the World Wide Web. With the introduction of e-learning or online learning and learning technologies, the distance education has moved from shallows into the mainstream. It has gained wide media attention with the vast number of publication and delivery systems thus signifying a new era of learning. This has led to a wider recognition by the academic community of the earlier less known and less respected phenomenon of distance education.

Distance education has gained momentum in the field of education and it is no longer on the margins of the educational system, tolerated as long as it conforms and defers to the accepted version or the resident instruction. It is no longer an alternative primarily for nontraditional students but is being incorporated into programs serving traditional campus-based students as well (Thompson, & Irele, 2003). As further elaborated by them, this movement from margins into the mainstream of institutional education has resulted in new image for distance education. Depending on one’s perspective, it has become either a shining promise or a looming threat either of which has the potential to transform the traditional educational environment.

Given the increasing prominence and the potentially transformative effects of new forms of distance education on the existing educational enterprise, performing rigorous evaluation and research studies have become imperative. As Bates (2000, c.f. Thompson, & Irele, 2003) points out, because of ‘the rapidity with which new technologies are infiltrating even the more cautious and conservative of universities, and the lack of
experience in the use and management of such technologies, the case for researching and evaluating the applications of the new technologies is obvious.

Evaluation in distance education could be challenging and confusing due to the complex nature of the enterprise. Majority of the evaluators in distance education would not spend an inordinate amount of time defining evaluation terms, clarifying evaluation concepts, and being confused with semantic differences that are apparent whenever the topic of evaluation is presented. However, the truth is that we must work our way through all of the terms, concepts and semantic differences if we are ever to move to the point of being able to construct and implement meaningful evaluation in distance education (Levine).

The major focus on evaluating should be to do it right, in the way of asking right questions and then using the answers appropriately. "Only thoughtful and focused examination of distance education programming, especially in its newest forms, will reveal whether, and under what conditions, the adoption of these innovations will be the fulfilment of the promise or the threat" (Thompson & Irele, 2003).

As the word itself signifies, the distance that exists between the teacher and the learner poses the major challenge in distance education. According to Levine, this distance creates a situation whereby the control of the teacher is reduced and the control of the learner is increased. The reduction in the teachers control leads to the reduction in the teacher’s ability to completely control the design and implementation of evaluation strategies. As pointed out by Levine, it is imperative that the educator in distance education explore evaluation strategies that provide for increased ways in which the learner can exercise control for the purpose of individual growth and development. Without such recognition of the enhanced role played by the learner in distance education, evaluation runs the risk of becoming a meaningless exercise that yields little valuable information. Input from the learner into the evaluative process is essential in a well designed distance education program.

Education evaluation in any form focuses on contributing to justifying programs, improving practices and projecting into future. In the distance education where the learner is more autonomous and has the power of moving away from the teacher, it is
essential that the practice of evaluation be moved more closer to the learner thus facilitating the orientation of evaluation towards learner needs and learner’s growth and development. As pointed out by Levine, through appropriate, learner-focused evaluation practice in distance education it is possible to recognize learner as a major partner in the teaching-learning environment, something that can be too easily overlooked in face to face learning situations. Evaluation in distance education must be carefully balanced between a traditional view that allows for program justification/development and a new view that has the potential for empowering learners.

In the current requirement to move the discipline of distance education into the mainstream of education has resulted in more demand for evaluation information. Evaluation studies should be more oriented towards rigorous planning and execution rather than unconsidered adoption of past approaches to evaluating traditional or distance programs. Careful planning and implementation of evaluation studies is necessary to obtain reliable information to ensure that whatever transformations taking place are intentional and directed.

2.3.5 Evaluation and the Course Developmental Cycle

Planning for course evaluation requires course developers to consider evaluation as being integral to the course developmental cycle. Four phases may be described as outlined in the diagram below.
Accordingly in the first phase of course development, evaluation may be considered in the course initiation phase. It includes the consideration of organizational needs and specific contextual factors influencing course design. In the second phase, evaluation is considered in relation to course development planning in which the feasibility and effectiveness of alternative methods of course delivery are assessed against the proposed goals. In the third phase, formative evaluation is considered as part of course implementation so as to describe how the courses are operating and to identify areas that need improvement. In the final phase evaluation is considered in the context of course review and accountability. During this phase, summative evaluation, documenting effectiveness and course impact can be conducted to make judgments about the worth of the course. This emphasizes the fact that course evaluation forms an integral part of the course development cycle and evaluation in many forms play a crucial role in initiation, development, implementation and finally reviewing of the course.

As pointed out by Cunningsworth (1995), when evaluating a course book, the potential is there to explore how far it lends itself to adaptation and if it offers possibilities for further
development. Even though many books contain many good ideas for teaching, the actual examples given in the book may not be suitable for a particular class. This concept is quite pertinent to the EGAP course books at OUSL, in terms of the apparent requirement to enhance choice and flexibility to cater to the diverse student population.

Cunningsworth (1995), further suggests that the course books can take a new role as an 'Ideas bank', a source of practical examples of ideas for teaching and also as an inspiration for stimulating teacher's creative potential. He further explains that benefits of such a partnership between teachers and the course books are considerable. As the course book cannot do what is obviously not possible, which is to tailor the materials to suit each individual class, the teachers can base the development of their own materials from ideas from the book. Cunnigsworth emphasizes that this will help teachers to work in a more personal and a more creative way, with confidence and originality. This idea is quite relevant and important for the EGAP course materials as it could be observed that some teachers adapt the materials and create their own materials to suit their student clientele. Those teachers proved to be more effective than the ones who opted to stick only to the content of the course book. As such motivating teachers to extend their expertise beyond the course book can be beneficial in serving the interests of mixed ability groups with diverse backgrounds.

Cunnigsworth further views the course books as a sound source of good ideas for teaching. He explains that activities in a course book, at first glance may not seem suitable but they can be based on sound ideas and are only inappropriate to particular teaching situation due to the subject content. As such, these activities can be adapted effectively by looking below the surface for underlying ideas that are good and can be developed further. Using the ideas through different subject matter could be a potential alternative. This concept also relate much and has the potential to enhance the EGAP programme in which students from different disciplines are catered to through a common course which focus on core language skills through a general content.
2.3.6 Supplementation for materials

It is a known fact through research and practice that the needs of a specific class of learners can never be totally met by a single course book, even when the course book is carefully designed to cater to the needs of the learners of a particular context. As explained in McGrath (2002), supplementation which means no more than 'adding something new', stems primarily from the recognition of a deficit: it is an attempt to bridge the gap between the course book and an official syllabus or (statement of aims), or a course book and demands of a public examination, or course book and students' needs. The perceived gaps in the course books are bridged through add-ons like DVDs, CDs, supplementary materials, etc.

Many teachers are impelled to provide additional materials as they feel and experience the need for extra help for their students depending on the context, student needs and other learner and context related factors. The diversity and differences in student groups require a range of materials and different approaches to practice. Differentiated materials may be a necessity especially with learners of different proficiency levels.

As further pointed out by McGrath, both type of supplementation -the cognitively-motivated and the affectively-motivated need to be fully integrated into course plans and lesson plans if they are to be maximally effective. He further points out that carefully selected or designed 'warm up' activities can serve their warm up purpose and can relate to the lesson as well. The same can be true for 'lightening' activities.

McGrath (2002) presents two ways of supplementing a course book:

1. by utilizing items, such as exercises, texts or activities, from another published source: a course book, a supplementary skills book, a book of practice exercises or a teacher’s resource book;
2. by devising our own materials; this may include the exploitation of authentic, visual or textual items.

Both approaches can be used in supplementation of the materials based on the requirements and by following the stipulated procedures.
2.4 Learner autonomy

According to Benson (2005), "autonomy has been defined as the capacity to take control over one's own learning. However the term 'autonomy' and 'autonomous learning' are often used in a way that can create confusion in terms of effectiveness". As further elaborated by Benson, to avoid confusion, it is helpful to distinguish three terms: autonomy as a learner attribute, autonomous learning as a mode of learning and autonomous learning programmes as educational programmes designed to foster autonomy. Benson further elaborates that autonomy refers to a capacity that learners possess and display to various degrees in different contexts. It is basically an attribute of the learners, although the development and display of autonomy are dependent on various factors in the learning situations.

As further pointed out by Benson (2005), autonomy cannot be 'taught' or 'learned' and for this reason, 'fostering autonomy' is referred to the educational initiatives that are designed to 'stimulate' or 'support' the 'development' of autonomy among learners. Accordingly, autonomous learning refers to learning in which the learners have a capacity to control their learning. Though certain educational programmes are designed to foster this capacity, in general this term does not indicate more than a claim or an intention. The student engaged in such programmes not necessarily be autonomous learners or engaged in autonomous learning. As explained by Benson, especially in distance learning programmes, autonomy seems to be more of a requirement that an intended outcome. In such programmes, it seems especially important to avoid the assumption that the learners are autonomous or engaged in autonomous learning simply because they are participating in the programme.

2.4.1 Learner autonomy and distance language learning

The main idea behind the concept of learner autonomy is that learners should be able to take charge of their own learning and dependency on the teacher wouldn’t help the learning process. Learner independence and learner autonomy occupy a central place in discussions of language learning in distance education. They are linked to "ideas and
assumptions about what constitutes an ideal learning environment and quality learning experiences and about the roles and responsibilities of distance learners” (White, 2004). Basically learner autonomy and individualized learning approaches to language learning are designed to foster student responsibility towards learning. Independent learning is interpreted in many different ways and is being argued by the scholars who promote collaborative control approach to learner autonomy. As argued by White (2004), independent learning in distance context is concerned with developing the ability to interact with, engage with and participate in particular learning environments, which are not always mediated by a teacher.

As claimed by relevant literature, autonomy is a multidimensional concept now firmly rooted in mainstream literature relating to language learning and teaching. As pointed out by Hurd (2005), however, while there are a number of theoretical descriptions of autonomous language learning, a single universal theory has yet to emerge on. As further pointed out by Hurd, the implications for a theory of autonomy are arguably even more complex in the case of distance language learning where highly structured course materials and fixed assessment points would appear to run counter to notions of choice and responsibility.

"Learner autonomy has long been considered both a central and a problematic concept in distance language learning. It is closely aligned to assumptions about what constitutes an ideal learning environment and a quality distance language learning experience” (White, 2003). She further elaborates that in some distance language courses, particularly within traditional models of distance learning, there is an emphasis on the learner independence. Emerging paradigms of distance language learning place an emphasis on learner development through collaborative control of learning experiences.

2.4.2 Critical reflection

Reflection is a major dimension of learner autonomy. Critical reflection can only be enhanced when the students are exposed to learning opportunities that stimulate critical thinking and to the situations where they can apply critical thinking skills. Critical
reflection implies an inner process which interplays with the more active or collaborative social processes to bring about a deeper awareness of self in language learning process. As pointed out by Hurd (2005, p.3), "collaboration with others through sharing the insights of reflection can enhance knowledge and lead to deeper understanding". The major role played by the cognitive dimension of language learning is emphasized by many researchers. Language learning is described as an interplay of social or interactive dimension and cognitive or the individual dimension. Those two aspects are given equal importance and language learning is a complex process of interaction between the two.

Though reflection is an integral part of learner autonomy, it does not come naturally to most learners. Hence, critical reflection needs to be developed through various techniques. As pointed out by Hurd (2005, p. 3), "strategy or learner training programmes, either embedded in the materials or as stand-alone elements can be effective". Advising the learners or 'counseling' is another option in training reflective learning. This may involve creating awareness through use of diaries or learning logs, training on strategy use, self-evaluation practices, etc. as part of gaining control over learning.

The shift of control of learning from teacher to learner is central to autonomous learning. As pointed out by Little (1995, c.f. Hurd, 2005, p. 4) "this profound change in role can bring feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and discomfort". Teachers in all educational contexts form the human interface between the learners and resources and as such need to develop the capacity for critical reflection within themselves in order to develop it in their learners. As such, learner autonomy is much dependent on teacher autonomy. Distance education contexts face more challenges and problems in developing learner autonomy, and as observed by Little (1995, c.f. Hurd, 2005), "the 'social interaction' or 'pedagogical dialogue' regarded as the 'decisive factor' in development of learner autonomy can be infinitely more difficult to achieve. Materials could be designed and used to promote 'dialogue' to some extent, but it is the tutor feedback, online or paper based, that can play a bigger role to create the effective conditions for learners to become good critical reflectors.
2.4.3 Fostering learner autonomy through SIM and self-access materials

Unlike self-access and tandem learning, which are often viewed as means to end of learner autonomy, distance learning and self-instruction are viewed more as situations in which learners are required to learn autonomously (Benson, 2011).

The first self-access centres were based on the idea that access to a rich collection of second language materials would give the learners the best opportunity for experimentation with self-directed learning (Benson, 2011). Benson further observes that in recent years, self-access language centres have proliferated to the extent where self-access language training is often referred to as self-directed or autonomous language learning. In many institutions, self-access centres have been established without any strong pedagogical backing or justification and often assumed that self-access centres will automatically lead to autonomy. As further pointed out by Benson, to a lesser extent, self-instructional materials and distances language practices go with the same assumption that learner autonomy will be one of the outcomes of these modes of learning. Years of experience with those modes of learning has shown that there is not necessarily be a connection between learner autonomy and the above modes of learning and autonomy is very much a result of how the modes of learning and relevant technology is used rather than what is used.

It is argued that in order to promote effective self-directed learning, adult learners would need to develop skills related to self-management, self-monitoring and self-assessment (Benson, 2011). He further elaborates that learners who were accustomed to teacher-centred learning would need to be psychologically prepared for learner-centred modes of learning. Holec (1980 c.f. Benson, 2011), clarifies that teaching learners how to carry out self-directed learning can be counter-productive, since the learning by definition no longer would be self-directed. Instead he suggests. He further elaborates that instead learners need to train themselves. Although, with the support of counsellors, teachers or other learners, the learner training should be carried out by learners themselves based on
the practice of self-directed learning. Self-direction is understood as the key to learning languages and the learning how to learn languages (Benson, 2011).

![Diagram of Autonomy Approaches](image)

**Figure 2.3 - Autonomy in language learning and related areas of practice**

### 2.4.4 Research on learner autonomy

Choudhry (2015), in a study on the teacher autonomy and its impact on the classroom practices in secondary schools of Bangladesh, points out the importance of teacher autonomy in fostering learner autonomy among students. In this study, the researcher stresses on the fact that teacher and learner autonomy is not just about making one's own choices but a far deeper concept of the competence to develop as self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in and beyond educational environments. This study further emphasizes on the fact that learner autonomy developed through school education is carried forward and developed further through years of tertiary education and lack of this could impact their education at tertiary level as well. The same situation was very obvious in the current research as the undergraduates in the OUSL seemed to be dependent on teacher and the classroom teaching to a great extent. Lack of autonomy on the part of teachers and learners impact and delay their adjustment to distance mode learning and teaching. This further proves the fact that creating
awareness and a theoretical background could be greatly supplemented and enhanced through well planned measures of fostering autonomy through their process of education.

Effective study skills play a fundamental role in ensuring academic success of students at tertiary level as they are expected to be more responsible for their own learning and make informed choices in their academic path. This is particularly important for distance learners as they are expected to exercise more independence, self-regulation and autonomy in their learning. In a survey on study habits of B Sc. undergraduates of higher academic standing at OUSL, Bandarage, Bopage and Fernando (2010) highlight the importance of adapting more effective study skills by the distance learners. The emphasis is laid mainly on the importance of students' perception and attitudes towards a course, learning approaches, self-confidence, personality, motivation and conceptions of knowledge. This study points out the fact that with realisation of the importance of effective study habits, many tertiary education institutes around the globe have introduced courses on study skills for new entrants. Apart from common study areas covered in such courses, the details may vary from institution to institution depending on the nature of the academic programme and the student characteristics. In the absence of such courses in OUSL, it could be assumed that the exposure and learning experience given through the EGAP programme as the starting point of their academic path, could provide very effective and positive initiative if those factors are taken into consideration and catered to accordingly.

2.4.5 Learner motivation

Motivating learners through self-instructional materials like live teachers can be motivating to different extents: highly motivating, moderately motivating or de-motivating. The degree of motivation such materials trigger in learners depend on two aspects: internals and externals.

Externals: All kinds of learner, young or old, are motivated to go through materials if they have pleasing externals: format, clear and attractive diagrams. It may be argued that decisions on externals of the materials are beyond the scope of the materials writers but it
can be presumed that better informed course writers can make useful suggestions which will be appreciated by decision makers.

**Internals:** The ultimate factor that motivate learners would be the quality of the materials. Many positive features of materials which promote motivation in learners, are as given below:

- fulfil the needs of the learners,
- exploit the experiences of learners,
- use personalized style in presenting information, etc.
- set interesting and enjoyable exercises,
- provide ample feedback,
- present assignments in order of their difficulty levels, and
- present study units of moderate length

(IGNOU, Division of Distance Education - Self-instructional materials -Block 1)

**2.4.6 Learner support systems**

Learners in a distance education context need support in many forms. As explained by Rowntree (1992), learners in DE, often learn through packages of materials but these packages are rarely adequate and learner need help in the form of human intervention. They need support from people who can help them with their learning needs and respond to them as individuals.

As viewed by Simpson (2000), learner support is "generally seen as encompassing tuition and a miscellany of activities with names like counseling, guidance and advice". Further, it includes the infrastructure facilities and the administrative support extended towards the learners.

Simpson (2000) further presents learner support in two broad categories and further subdivisions within those categories. The two main categories are academic support and non-academic support. This categorization can be illustrated as follows;
Figure 2.4 Student support

As further discussed by Simpson (2000), academic student support consists of the following:

- defining the course territory;
- explaining concepts;
- exploring the course;
- feedback- both informal and formal assessment;
- developing learning skills- numeracy and literacy;
- chasing progress- following up students' progress through the course;
- enrichment - extending the boundaries of the course and sharing the excitement of learning.

Simpson (2000) further elaborates that the first two items in the list may well be the responsibility of the course materials rather than the tutor in DE. As further viewed by him, the challenge would be to move tutors away from the traditional explicative modes of working in order to emphasize the other facilitative modes.

According to Simpson (2000), non-academic support can be listed as follows:

- advising - giving information, exploring problems, and suggesting direction;
- assessment - giving feedback to the individual on non-academic aptitudes and skills;
- action - practical help to promote study;
advocacy - making out a case for funding, writing out a reference;
agitation - promoting changes within the institution to benefit students;
administration - organizing student support.

The information above on learner support relates much to the current research study on EGAP materials. The holistic view on the learner support situates the role of materials in total course experience by indicating the central role of material in defining the course boundaries yet highlighting its potential to expand beyond the set limits with the effective use of other students support services. This is an aspect that has often been neglected on the part of learners, teachers as well as the administrators.

In a research study on support for L2 learners in the open universities, Kumar (1999), points out that there is a gap between learner needs and the support provided to the learners which results in lower completion rate. As a solution he proposes that there should be interaction with the students to find out their needs and measures should be taken to incorporate those into their courses. Through his study based on a heterogeneous group of students with varied needs and levels of proficiency, he has found out that inadequate knowledge of DE and the learners' roles as distance learners, they tend to carry a teacher centred notion of learning. Further, their conventional education up to tertiary level further influence this concept. Kumar (1999) further points out that materials provided to them did not match their needs and levels of proficiency and as such the tutor had to be responsible to bridge the gap. Further he emphasize that it is evident from the study that in such a situation, awareness raising activities could help, both for training the learners to distance learners and also good language learners.

More or less the same situations and conditions apply to students, tutors and course materials of the EGAP course and it is apparent that similar measures are required to bridge the prevailing gaps.
2.5 Adult learner

Adult learners and their traits and characteristics are closely linked to tertiary education, DE and lifelong learning. The teaching and learning approaches are mostly defined by the learner traits and needs and this is a crucial aspect in course design and materials design as well. Therefore, careful consideration and in depth awareness is required in approaches to the concept of adult learning.

How are adult learners different from children?

- Adults are capable of abstract thinking and as such do not need to engage in activities like games and songs.
- Adults can be expected to have background knowledge on various things and hence, a range of topics can be introduced into the adult classroom.
- Previous learning experiences, mostly at school, make the adult learners form strong opinions about how learning should take place. As such, many of them have their preferred learning methods.
- The memories of their previous learning experiences and their success or failure can affect their next learning experiences. Past failures can lead to anxiety among adult learners.
- The classroom behaviour of the adult learners is usually better than other age groups.
- Usually adult learners have a clear understanding of what they want to learn and why they want to learn it. This factor motivates them even at the times they are bored.

(Source - Teacher knowledge: Core concepts in English language teaching by Jeremy Harmer)

Adult learner and autonomous learning are closely linked. As pointed out by Benson (2011), the most immediate influence on autonomy in language learning came from research and practice in the field of adult, self-directed learning.
Graddol (1997), observes a rapid growth in the service sector of the economies, in the 21st century. This also couples with a growing demand in the tertiary sector and particularly in adult education, where the English language skills formerly taught to university students may not be sufficient to meet the demands of the new enterprises. As such, widespread innovations are taking place and can be expected in English language curricula in many countries. As such, the need is emphasized to equip the modern day learners with new skills. As further observed by Graddol, the shift of emphasis from low skilled employment to knowledge intensive industries means that educate labour will be in greater demand everywhere, yet the required knowledge and skills will need regular updating, creating a more flexible labour force frequent retraining. These current trends and demands in the employment sector indicate the need for more innovative and updated knowledge from the tertiary education to suit the present day requirements. Hence, language learning at tertiary level requires frequent innovation and updating.

2.5.1 Theoretical base of Andragogy

Adult education is guided by the theories and principles of Andragogy. The American educator, Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997) was well known for the use of the term 'Andragogy' as synonymous to the adult education. According to Knowles, andragogy is the "art and science of adult learning, thus it refers to any form of adult learning". (Kearsley, 2010. c.f. Web page of Northern Arizona University).

Knowles describes 5 characteristics of adult learners:

1. Self-concept: with maturity a person self concept shift from being dependent toward a self-directed human being
2. Experience: with maturity a person accumulates a lot of experience that becomes a increasing resource for learning.
3. Readiness to learn; with maturity, a person's readiness to learn tend to depend more on developmental tasks of his/her social roles.
4. Orientation to learning; with maturity, a person's application of knowledge shifts from postponed application to immediacy of application. Further, his/her learning orientation changes from subject centeredness to problem centeredness.
5. Motivation to learn; *with maturity, a person's willingness to learn becomes internal.* (Knowles 1984:12 in Smith, M., 2002 - Web page of Northern Arizona University)

Also according to Knowles (1984), there are four principles that are applied to adult learning:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life.

(Kearsley, 2010, c.f. Web page of Northern Arizona University)

It is emphasized that educators teaching adult learners need to know the concepts of the adult learning theory and be able to incorporate them into their teaching style. Further, educators need to become *facilitators* of adult education, and help the adult learner to set and achieve goals and also should guide them in choosing the subjects and courses needed to fulfil these goals. The educators need to keep in mind that the adult learner needs to know why the course is important to their learning and life situations. It should be taken into consideration that the adult learner brings into the continuing educational arena a rich array of experiences that will affect the learning styles and assimilation of knowledge. Adult learners need to be able to apply the knowledge into their learning process and extend them to their life situations.

Further, Knowles initiated many approaches to adult learning and opened the doors of inquiry and the study of adult education. It is emphasized that there is a need to continue his study and to continue to support, design and implement curriculums tailored to the educational needs of the adult learner in today’s society. Innovations in technology has opened up many avenues in adult education. With advancing technology, there is a continuing need to re-educate and provide continuing education in the academic as well
as the business and industrial environment (c.f. Web page of Northern Arizona University).

Adapting adult learners within higher education focuses more on the ways the institutions and programmes can modify course delivery and student services and course delivery formats. "Adult education research also provides insight into understanding the characteristics of these learners within the classroom or distance education environment" (Ross-Gordon 2003, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011).

In recent decades, several theoretical approaches to adult learning have served as useful lenses for research on adult learners; these frameworks help researchers think about practices across various contexts of adult learning, including the college classroom. Andragogy is arguably the best-known of these theoretical approaches. (Knowles 1980, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011). While andragogy has been widely debated by scholars, who note the situational variables that influence the degree to which adults exhibit these characteristics, this framework is one of the most enduring and widely cited theories of adult learning (Merriam 2001, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011).

Other adult learning theories centre on self-directed learning (SDL), a key assumption of Andragogy and itself the focus of numerous professional conferences and papers. One SDL theory posited that educational goals within formal education could be supported by using teaching methods and assignments designed to increase learner control of the learning process relative to that of instructors (Candy 1991, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011). Other theories suggest that self-directed learning can be situational and may be exhibited at different levels among college students of various ages as they encounter different learning environments (Grow 1991, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011).

In the past twenty years, transformative learning (TL) has become one of the most prominent and debated theories in adult learning research, with the version of TL proposed by Jack Mezirow (2000, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011) receiving perhaps the greatest attention. Mezirow and others view transformational learning as involving fundamental
transformation of the adults’ core frames of reference, often in response to disorienting dilemmas-situations that challenge adults’ previous ways of thinking about the world and prompt them to reflect critically on previously held assumptions. While much of the research on transformational learned has focused on TL that occurs both in higher education and naturally as an outgrowth of adult life situations, some have also proposed that educators can help stimulate transformative learning by using teaching methods that foster critical reflection (Cranton 1994, c.f. Ross-Gordon 2011).

2.5.2 Research on ELT in distance education

As pointed out by White (2003), there is relatively little published research in distance language learning and most of these exist as accounts of practice or descriptions of language programmes. In particular, there is an absence of the kind of 'close' research to investigate what language teachers and learners actually do and how this relates to the development of language skills. It should be further noted that the immense variability within and across different distance learning settings define and create the learning spaces specific to the context.

Materials in DE is a defining factor which influence the success of the learning out come. Further, learner traits has is a significant attribute in the learning outcome, given the diverse nature of the learners and their requirements. Shankar (1997), in a research conducted on the 'processes of language learning and the problems faced by learners in comprehension', claims the many problems in comprehension are due to drawbacks in the materials as well as the inadequacies shown by the learners. The study further suggests that the problems faced by the learners could be addressed effectively through modifying the materials and also by directing the distance learners towards an autonomous and skilful mode of learning. This emphasises the complementary nature of materials and learner traits in DE and the necessity to balance both aspects to enhance the efficacy of the learning process. This has a special relevance to EGAP programme in the OUSL in the sense that the current study put forward a similar claim. It stresses on the importance of learner needs and learner training as much as the importance of modifying materials to effectively cater to the learner needs.
Learner support is an integral part of a distance education context. The nature, suitability and effectiveness of learner support can have a huge impact on the quality of the learning outcome. Support can be in the form of academic support and the administrative support. Academic support includes the additional materials and methodological support where as administrative support can include other resources, information and infrastructure facilities. Kumar (1999) observes a mismatch between the support provided and the needs of the English language learners in a distance mode university. This study claims that understanding the needs of the open university learners is essential in order to decide and design a support component in the programme. Furthermore, it is stressed that this understanding can only be achieved through face-to face interaction with the learners. The study also emphasise the need to cater to the requirements of learners of varied needs and proficiency levels. This study relates to the current study in terms of the similarities between the context of study, the learner population and the rationale behind the study.

2.6 English for academic purposes (EAP)

In a more provisional, rather general working definition of EAP, Jordan (1997), describes EAP as the discipline concerned with those communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal education system. If EAP is explained in more detail, it has two major divisions: common core or subject specific (c. F. Jordan, 1997). These two divisions have been further described as English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). As further described by Jordan, a larger proportion of the common core element is known as 'study skills'. On the other hand, subject specific English is the language required for a particular academic subject together with its disciplinary culture. It includes the appropriate academic convention together with the structure, vocabulary and the particular skills needed for the subject.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has evolved from its modest roots to become an emerging global phenomenon. University education is globalizing and English is
becoming established as the medium of instruction in a diverse range of contexts (Chazel, 2014 p.3). He further elaborates that while EAP has developed to meet the students’ needs, it is not only students, but also their teachers who are becoming increasingly mobile. The term 'EAP' appears to have been first used in 1974 by Tim Johns (Smith, 2013. c.f. Chazel 2014). The field of EAP has grown ever since as an increasing number of students seek education in English medium, especially in universities.

The dominance of English medium education in English speaking countries is challenged by establishment of English medium educational institutions and universities in the other parts of the world and EAP has become a wide spread context across the world. The student enrolment in such institutions is typically very rapid and their needs are diverse and demanding. As explained by Chazel (2014), what EAP and ESP have in common is that they are both needs driven; students are learning English with a particular purpose in mind, which is identifiable and describable, and these descriptions form the basis of the EAP or ESP programme.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses are offered in institutions where the learners whose native language is not English, and are required to pursue education in English medium. Those courses are offered as support courses to enhance their English language skills in order to communicate effectively in academic discourse. the words in themselves are not specific to any particular discipline; they occur across disciplines and are therefore essential for students of any discipline.
The widely and generally accepted purposes for which English is needed is denoted by Jordan (1997) as follows:

**GENERAL PURPOSES**
- For no particular purpose, communicative situations
  - e.g. school exams

**SOCIAL PURPOSES**
- for conversational purposes, and
  - e.g. shopping, letter-writing, telephoning and survival English

**ENGLISH FOR OCCUPATIONAL/VOCATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES (EOP/EVP/EPP)**
- e.g. doctors, airline pilots, hotel staff

**ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC ACADEMIC PURPOSES (ESAP)**
- e.g. medicine, engineering, economics

**ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP)**
- e.g. listening and note taking, academic writing, reference skills, seminars and discussions. Plus: general academic English register, formal and academic style proficiency in language use.

**ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)**

Figure 2.8: English: Purposes (Jordan, 1997)

The focus of the EAP is "not on the subject and the specific language of the subject itself but on the skills, competences and the language needed to study the subject" (Chazel,
2014). He further elaborates that in terms of learning vocabulary, technical and scientific vocabulary would be the main focus whereas in an EAP class would include any core words and general academic words.

A major challenge for EAP teachers is to make learning not just relevant but engaging and motivating. To reach this end, not only the materials and the learner factors but also the teacher competency, teachers' capacity as EAP teachers and teachers' awareness play an important role. EAP teachers need a very clear understanding of the context, the role expected of them and the necessary background and training to perform that role competently. In many contexts especially in the contexts of the focus of this research, these factors have been given less importance due to reason that more prominence being given language teaching and relevant aspects. Further, many practical situations and realities restrict the approaches to a more EAP based approach to teaching and learning.

English for special academic purposes (ESAP) courses are designed on the basis that certain disciplines need specific language skills to deal with their academic courses and those needs should be catered to through language courses dealing with those specific requirements of the disciplines (Eg. English for Science, English for Engineering, English for Legal Studies, etc.)

The diverse nature of the learners entering the higher education and heterogeneity in the language skills and exposure have created the need for English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) though they are not geared to address the needs for their respective academic disciplines. As observed by Liyanage and Birch (2001), it is often difficult to relate such EGAP content to students’ academic disciplines or to address their academic needs in classes which contain students from a range of academic backgrounds.

As elaborated by Chazel (2014), English for Academic purposes involves the teaching and learning of English language so that students can operate effectively in the disciplines; their relevant subject areas, in an academic institution, typically a university.
2.6.1 Theoretical Perspectives of EGAP and ESAP

EAP courses are developed along three major aspects: disciplinary knowledge, strategic or organizational knowledge and language knowledge. As elaborated by (Bruce, 2015), EAP has branched off from the slightly older field of language teaching - English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The content and aims of the ESP programmes are defined by the specific needs of the learners and are designed to cater to such specific requirements of the target learners. As claimed by Widdowson (1983), based on the aims of the courses has described ESP as wide angle and narrow angle ESP course depending on the degree of specificity. As further described by Widdowson (1983), narrow angle ESP courses are essentially training exercise designed to 'provide learner with a restricted competence to enable them to cope with clearly defined tasks (p. 6). On the other hand he proposes that wide angle ESP course are closer to general purpose English courses which seek to provide the learners with a general capacity to enable them to cope with undefined eventualities in the future.

Widdowson (1983), in defining the underlying types of knowledge and skills that are the focus of ESP courses, makes a distinction between competence and capacity.

**competence** - "the speaker's knowledge of the language system...his/her knowledge also of social rules which determine the appropriate use of linguistic forms"

**capacity** - "the ability to create meanings by exploiting the potential inherent in the language for continual modification in response to change" (p. 7)

In the continuum of narrow to wide angle for categorizing ESP, Widdowson places ESP courses at the wide angle end where future academic language needs of the learners relate to 'competence' as well as 'capacity'. Many scholars; writers and theorists (Blue, 19988; Coffey, 1984; Jordan, 1989) argue that EAP also needs to focus on the specific characteristics of academic disciplines. Jordan (1997) proposes a balanced view that depending on the needs of the students, EAP courses may be more general which he terms English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), or relate more closely to the needs of studying in a more specific discipline which he terms as English for Specific
Academic Purposes (ESAP). Hyland (2002b) argues strongly for disciplinary specificity and suggests that there needs to be a greater focus on disciplinary specificity in academic English courses and challenges the validity and usefulness of general EAP courses.

With the switch from ESAP to EGAP, the question arises whether the principles of EGAP are fully applicable to the students of specific disciplines or a compromise should be arrived at in order to cater to their specific language needs. EGAP approach direct teachers to attempt to isolate the skills, language forms and study activities thought to be common to all disciplines. As pointed out by Dudley–Evans and St. Johns (1998), these can be listening to lectures, reading text books, attempting tutorial, writing essays, examination answers, reports etc. where all those activities are approached as common generic skills.

From the point of view of ESAP, though certain generalizations can be made, the differences among these skills and conventions across distinct disciplines may be greater than the similarities. ESAP therefore concerns the teaching of skills and language which are related to the demands of a particular discipline or department.

The issue of specificity therefore challenges EAP teachers to take a stance on how they view language and learning and to examine their courses in the light of this stance. It forces us to ask the question whether there are skills and features of language that are transferable across different disciplines or whether we should focus on the texts, skills and forms needed by learners in different disciplines (Hyland, 2006).

As will be focused on, in the current research, the possibility of reaching a middle ground where the requirements of the students are catered to the potential has become a requirement for the best interest of the students. The context where the research will be conducted, EGAP has become a must due to many theoretical and practical issues. The practitioners are of the view that a common core of generic skills should be offered through a common EGAP course for all disciplines and it is assumed that students should and do posses the ability to adapt those common core skills in to their respective
academic contexts. The practical issues like the limitations in infrastructure, qualified teachers, limited number of academic staff to cater to the academic needs like guiding and training teachers, preparation of course material, and the difficulties faced in serving a large student population were other contributory factors in arriving at the decision to implement EGAP in place of ESAP. Therefore a need has arisen to cater to the specific needs of the students while teaching the generic skills through EGAP courses.

The debate on EGAP and ESAP has been going on for a long time with prominent scholars expressing their views for and against both concepts. The concept of specificity was central to Halliday et al. (1964) original conception of ESP where they characterized it as entered on the language and activities appropriate to a particular disciplines and occupations which distinguished ESP from general English. With time the concept has become more complex due to the multidisciplinary nature of the university courses and the demands they place on the students. There is, however, still a need to stress students’ target goals and to prioritize the competences we want them to develop and these often relate to the particular fields in which they will mainly operate (Hyland, 2006). Some EAP writers like Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Blue (1988), and Spack (1988), argue against subject specific teaching on the grounds that our emphasis should be on learners and learning rather than on target texts and practices. Dudley - Evans and St. Johns (1988) on the other hand, suggest that teachers should first help students develop core academic skills with more specific work to be accomplished later (c.f. Hyland, 2006).

All those counter arguments put together do not suggest that there are no generalizable features in academic discourse. Most students will encounter exams and be expected to make notes, give presentations and write assignments. In terms of language, the fact that we are able to talk about’ academic discourse’ at all means that the disciplines share prominent features as a register distinct from those we are familiar with in the work or home place. These concentrations of features which connect language use with academic contexts are useful for students to be aware of. One immediately obvious feature of an academic register is, and one which students often find most intimidating, is what might be seen is the comparatively high degree of formality in academic texts. Essentially this
formality is achieved through the use of specialist vocabulary, impersonal voice and the ways that ideas get packed into relatively few words (Hyland, 2006).

2.6.2 Scholarly debates on ESAP and EGAP

Hyland (2006), points out many reasons for choosing an approach on General EAP or specific EAP.

Reasons for General EAP

- It is assumed that language teachers do not possess the training, expertise and confidence to teach subject-specific conventions. Hence, it is believed that English teachers’ lack of competence to deal with specialist content may do a disservice to the relevant disciplines and mislead students who need exposure to different genres.
- Students with limited English language proficiency find it difficult to deal with EAP content. They may need preparatory classes in general English before dealing with subject specific language tasks.
- Supporting academic departments through EAP may assume a low status service role than conducting independent courses to improve subject knowledge and skills.
- Further, subject specific language knowledge (through EAP) may not prepare students for unpredictable and unexpected assignments and communicative demands.
- Certain generic skills which are said to differ very little across disciplines.(eg. scanning and skimming, reading texts for information, taking notes from lectures and text books, giving oral presentations paraphrasing and summarizing arguments etc. Jordan, 1997)
- The requirement of EAP courses is to focus on a common core – a set of language forms or skills that are found in almost all, contexts and which can be transferred across disciplines.
Reasons for Specific EAP

- EAP teachers cannot depend on subject teachers to teach the subject specific language skills. Subject teachers may not have a proper understanding of how language behave in their discipline and they are may not have time to develop this understanding in their students.

- Research on second language acquisition do not support The argument that weak students need to learn core forms before moving on to specific and more difficult, features of language. Students do not learn language skills in a linear sequence but acquire features of language as they need them. As such students can be exposed to subject specific language while they are learning basic level language structures.

- The view that teaching specific language skills relegate EAP to a lower status can be disputed based on the fact that common core assumes there is an single over arching literact represented by general EAP skills. The concept of ESAP recognizes the differences and complexities across disciplines within this overarching common core.

- A major doubt about common core is its inability to recognize and capture the fact that any form has many possible meanings depending on its context of use.

- In addition to the focus on form, EAP classes teach a range of subject-specific communicative skills as which cannot wait until the mastering common core grammar features and need to be addressed at the right point.

According to Barnard and Zemach (2003, c.f. Hyland, 2006), two important points should be kept in mind when dealing with ESP.

a. ESP covers an enormous range of content areas, such as business, medicine, engineering, history, arts and design: in fact any area of contemporary academic or professional life where English is needed.

b. ESP is not an approach, a method or a technique. The only feature common to all types of ESP course is the selection of the content and teaching approach.
according to the perceived needs of the learners. Consequently, needs analysis generally plays a more pivotal role in ESP than in EGP.

ESP is an umbrella term that refers to the teaching of English to students who are learning the language for a particular work or study related reason. Therefore, an ESP course is rather context dependent.

2.6.3 Disciplinary specificity and EAP

In Bruce (2015), disciplinary diversity is referred to as "how subjects differ in the ways in which they create, use and report knowledge". In an inter-disciplinary EAP course (pre-sessional) the student population will be aiming to take a variety of subjects in a university. Bruce further explains that in such courses, it is important to include conscious raising activities so that students realize that academic expectations, conventions and orientations will vary greatly between disciplines and their particular genres. He further clarifies on ways the teachers can incorporate disciplinary diversity into their curriculum which include;

- having a multi-context and multi-textual focus when implementing different types of task, for example, when examining language of a critique, an extension activity could involve examining and comparing critique texts from a number of disciplines
- focusing on disciplinary differences in the areas of writer identity and positioning in relation to audience, such as examining the author's use of meta-discourse to address their audiences in a number of texts using the model referred to by Hyland (2005)
- examining the use of citation practices and the persuasive use of citation in the texts of different disciplines (Hyland, 1999).

In a corpus based research on academic vocabulary, Hyland (2009), has presented evidence for disciplinary variation in academic lexis pointing to the limitations of academic word list as a general academic recourse. As evidenced by the research
findings, the different distributions of frequency of forms and functions across disciplines helps to show the ways disciplines draw on different resources to develop their arguments, establish their credibility and persuade their learners.

Further, this research has clear implications for EAP practitioners. As pointed out by Hyland and Tse, these findings undermine the widely held assumption that there is a single core vocabulary needed in academic study. The differential nature the lexical items and lexical bundles occur and behave in different disciplinary environments suggest the EAP materials writers and teachers the importance of the instruction to be student's target specific context. Hyland and Tse further elaborate on the fact that many research studies show the extent to which language features are specific to their particular disciplines, and that the best way to prepare students for their studies is not to search for universally appropriate teaching items, but to provide them with an understanding of the features of the discourses they will encounter in their respective courses.

As pointed out by Hyland (2006), moving beyond the classroom, specificity is also critical to how EAP is perceived and how it moves forward as a field of inquiry and practice. As further elaborated by Hyland, placing specificity at the heart of EAP's role means that teachers are less likely to focus on decontextualized forms, less likely to see genres as concrete artefacts rather than interactive processes and less likely to emphasize a one-best-way approach to instruction. Hyland (2006) further explains that in the EGAP approach, teachers attempt to isolate the skills, language forms and study activities thought to be common to all disciplines. those are taught as generic skills and assumed to be transferred across disciplines when the students are required adapt them to their own academic fields. As viewed by Hyland, ESAP on the contrary, reflects the idea that though some generalizations can be made, the difference among these skills and conventions across disciplines may be greater than the similarities. As such ESAP focuses mainly on teaching language skills and conventions pertaining to a particular discipline.
Hyland further points out that ESAP challenges the EAP teachers to take a stance on how they view language learning and to examine their courses in the light of this stance. In this light, it is arguable whether there are skills and features of language which are transferable across disciplines or whether the focus should be on distinct language features of a particular discipline.

The ongoing debate on the requirement for teaching core language competencies and discipline specific language needs had become even more complex due to the current trend of university courses being more multidisciplinary. As pointed out by Hyland, some EAP writers, such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Blue (1988), Spack (1988) argue against ESAP teaching based on the grounds that our emphasis should be on learners and learning rather than on target texts and practices. Some other writers like Dudley Evans and St John (1988) suggest that "teachers should first help students develop core academic skills followed by more specific language skills to be accomplished at a later stage".

2.7 Conclusion

Numerous theoretical and practical aspects are part of the process of developing, using and evaluating materials for language learning in DE. The process becomes even more complex when additional aspects like EAP, learner differences, adult learning and mixed ability groups have to be taken into consideration and be incorporated in the materials. The ultimate target of promoting learner autonomy and enhancing language competence and capacity is rather challenging tasks. In the light of this complex phenomenon, this chapter made an attempt to situate EGAP materials in use at OUSL in the wider context of SIM materials in DE and the field of ELT as a whole.